

REMARKS

Claims 1-30 are pending.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Blalock et al. (Pub. No. 2001/0047284) and further in view of Sheth (Pub. No. 2001/0032170). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has acknowledged that Blalock does not teach assigning at least one identifier to the bidders in each subset, the subset associated with the identifier being unknown to one or more of the bidders outside of the subset but known to each of the bidders within the subset as recited in Claim 1. The Examiner has suggested that Sheth discloses this limitation. Sheth describes a system in which vendors selected from a list of known vendors are invited to participate in a private marketplace. (Sheth, [0086]). Additionally, those vendors selected to participate in the marketplace may be allowed to view the bids of other vendors based on a selection made by the private marketplace user. (Sheth, [0090]). Selecting **participants** from a list of known vendors and then optionally allowing **all** participants to view each other's **bids** is not the same as "assigning at least one identifier to the bidders in each subset, the subset associated with the identifier being unknown to one or more of the bidders outside of the subset but known to each of the bidders within the subset" as recited in Claim 1. Therefore, Claim 1 is believed to be allowable. Independent Claims 12, 13, and 22 each recite a similar limitation and are therefore also believed to be allowable.

Claims 2-11 are dependent from claim 1 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

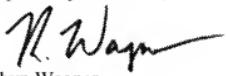
Claims 14-21 are dependent from claim 13 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

Claims 23-30 are dependent from claim 22 and are believed to be allowable for the same reasons described above.

Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested based on the preceding remarks. If at any time the Examiner believes that an interview would be helpful, please contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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